

HELEN FOWLES

Tape 185

Interviewed April 1987

Transcribed by Lori G. Robinson, July 2001

The following is an interview conducted by a LaPoint sixth grader, whose name is unknown.

Interviewer (I): What changes have you witnessed in prices?

Helen Fowles (Helen): In prices? Well, when I was a girl, well you girls' ages, bread was ten cents a loaf, and shoes was... I used to pay two and a half for shoes. And my husband, he said his dad always bought them scout shoes, and that was less than two dollars. A picture show ticket was ten cents up to twelve, then they were twenty-five cents after that. Gas was twenty-five cents a gallon. You could get four gallons for a dollar then, and now you can only get just about one gallon.

I: Okay. What was the one thing you liked to buy that you had enough money for?

Helen: Oh, well, since we've got older, it's good to not have to run bills, and we buy 'bout everything we need now. Like we never run a grocery bill. The things that we buy, like a TV, we generally can pay cash for it and things like that.

I: Did you like penny candy when you were little and why?

Helen: Oh, that's all the kids liked. It was good. You know, when I was a girl, my mother used to send me to the butcher shop with a dozen eggs to buy a fifteen cent soup bone for dinner, and then she'd always put two eggs in it for me to buy penny candy with. And we sure did like it just like you kids do now.

I: What was it like to go to town when you were a girl?

Helen: Well, when I was a girl, we lived close to town, so we walked. It was only two or three blocks from town, and we'd walk. My dad worked in the flour mill, he was a miller. And my mother, she tended the home. It was just a good thing to just go to town and go to the picture show. I remember one time when we went to the picture show, and my dad and mother walked to town. It was only two blocks, and it was so good to walk to town. My brother and I, we walked ahead, and the older folks, they walked behind. But it was fun to go as a family.

I: Did you ever get an allowance? If yes, what did you do to earn it? If not, then what would you do to get money?

Helen: Oh, we didn't get allowance. My folks never give allowance. Then, when we needed

something for anything, why, my folks would give us the money. Or, I used to babysit when I got older. I'd go and work for a family. It was a couple that had one child, and I would tend that baby for fifty cents a evening, say from seven o'clock until twelve, for fifty cents.

I: How much money did your mom spend on food each week?

Helen: Oh, lands, she never spent near as much as we do now because the things weren't near as expensive then as they are now, and so I could guess how much she spent, but it wasn't near as much as it is now.

I: Describe what it was like when you had money to spend when you were a little girl?

Helen: I remember one Fourth of July I had a whole dollar, and first thing what I bought, I bought me an ice cream soda with that. That was the first time I ever had an ice cream soda, and that, that was fifty cents. That took half of my money, but that was so good.

I: What kind of jobs did you have that was common?

Helen: Well, when I got older in high school, I'd go and help ladies houseclean or tend their children or run errands. We had a neighbor lady that, every Sunday when we'd have Conference, why, she'd have several of her family from another town come and have dinner, and I remember on them Sundays I would always go and help her set the table and help her peel potatoes and anything that I could to help her with her meal.

I: Could kids get jobs for money? If so, then what did they do? If not, why couldn't they?

Helen: Well, there, the children used to work. They used to thin sugar beets, the boys when they'd get out. You know, my husband's family, all the kids, they had nine children, and they thinned beets and sugar beets, and then in the fall, why they topped 'em. They always topped 'em by hand then. It isn't like a machine now. Up in Idaho, they'd always have to do it by hand. Oh, and they used to help each other. The farmers used to go together. They'd help each other, and they'd go from one farm to another and put up the hay. And when they'd get that done, why they'd go another place, and they'd help each other 'cause it was cheaper that way.

I: What kind of money did you have? Is it the same as what we have now?

Helen: Yes. Yes, the money was the same. It never changed.